



Commonwealth of Kentucky Labor Cabinet

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Kentucky's Workplace Injury and Illness Rate is Lowest in History

Gov. Beshear credits education, partnerships and enforcement

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Nov. 24, 2015) – The Kentucky Labor Cabinet announced today the latest incidence rate involving all employer-reported workplace injury and illnesses was 3.8 per 100 equivalent full-time workers, which is the lowest rate in Kentucky since the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics began recording the data in 1996. This rate is for the entire 2014 calendar year.

“The safety and health of our workers should be a top concern for any governor, and I’m especially proud that our workplace injury and illness rate is the lowest it’s ever been,” said Gov. Steve Beshear. “Workplace injuries and fatalities are preventable, and they should be taken very seriously.”

“Simply put, workers are safer now in Kentucky than ever before,” said Kentucky Labor Secretary Larry L. Roberts. “This is a work in progress, however, because safety doesn’t just happen by accident. Programs such as the Labor Cabinet’s free consultation surveys, partnerships with employers and targeted enforcement of certain higher-risk industries are crucial to the continued decline in workplace incidents.”

What is the Incidence Rate?

The incidence rate represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers per year. Each year in Kentucky, employers report approximately 16,000 non-fatal workplace injuries and illnesses involving days away from work, job transfer or restricted duty. There were 15,650 reported in Kentucky in 2014; 16,660 in 2013; and 16,620 in 2012.

The Kentucky Labor Cabinet provides this information to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, which conducts an annual survey of occupational injuries and illnesses. The survey also captures data from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) logs of workplace injuries and illnesses maintained by employers as required by law.

Closing the Gap

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics began recording incidence rate data in 1996, when Kentucky's rate was 8.4 per 100 full-time workers. This rate is for all private and public industries in Kentucky. The rate has been declining every year in Kentucky since 2010, when it was 4.5.

Kentucky's incidence rate is slightly higher than the national average of 3.2. The national average has dropped from 3.3 in 2013 and 3.4 in 2012. Kentucky is closing the gap more than ever before, going from 4.2 in 2012 to 4.1 in 2013 and now to 3.8.

Lowering the Rate

There are a number of industries in Kentucky for which injury and illness rates are much higher than Kentucky's overall average in 2014. The two areas with the highest injury and illness rates were the machine shop industry (12.5 in 2013) and the wood container and manufacturing industry (11.5). The Kentucky Labor Cabinet worked directly with those companies to eliminate hazards and improve health. As a result, machine shops have fallen from 12.5 to 8.5, and wood container and pallet manufacturing fell from 11.5 to 8.8.

Since 1972, Kentucky has operated through a state plan approved by OSHA, which allows Kentucky to have its own jurisdiction for enforcement, on-site consultation, standards promulgation, and training services related to workplace safety and health.

The Kentucky Labor Cabinet's Occupational Safety and Health Program (KY OSH) works with Kentucky employers in many ways to improve workplace conditions. Free consultative surveys and partnership programs allow highly-trained staff of the Labor Cabinet's Education and Training Division to perform audits of workplaces to identify hazards. Industry-specific inspection programs allow KY OSH compliance investigators the ability to focus on high-risk industries.

Initiatives such as the Fall Prevention Stand-Down Campaign and Heat Stress Program raise awareness and provide free training and information to employers and employees. More than 80,000 Kentucky workers have taken free [online training](#) through the Labor Cabinet's online courses and webinars. Each year, the Labor Cabinet provides approximately 1,500 safety managers and employees with free, hands-on training in classroom settings at major population centers throughout Kentucky.

The Labor Cabinet also works with the Kentucky Safety and Health Network to co-host the annual Governor's Safety and Health Conference, which brings together hundreds of working men and women, safety managers, occupational health nurses, construction managers and plant managers each year to discuss workplace safety and health matters.

Efforts to reduce workplace illnesses are part of Gov. Steve Beshear's goal to improve the health of all Kentuckians. The Governor launched [kyhealthnow](#) last year as an aggressive and wide-ranging initiative to reduce incidents and deaths from Kentucky's dismal health rankings and habits. It builds on Kentucky's successful implementation of health care reform and uses multiple strategies over the next several years to improve the state's collective health.

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The Kentucky Labor Cabinet's primary responsibility is to ensure that divisions and offices falling under the auspices of the Cabinet work within the jurisdiction of Kentucky labor law to ensure equitable and fair treatment of the Commonwealth's nearly 1.9 million wage-earning employees. The Cabinet, according to regulation, has the duties, responsibilities, power, and authority relating to labor, wage and hour issues, occupational safety and health of employees, child labor, apprenticeship, workers' compensation insurance, and all other matters under the jurisdiction of the Labor Cabinet. For more information, visit www.labor.ky.gov/.

